



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jeffrey L. Clet
Fire Chief

SUBJECT: FIRE MANDATED INSPECTIONS OF SCHOOLS – ESTIMATED COSTS **DATE:** May 25, 2004

Approved: /s/

Date:

The Fire Department has prepared this memorandum in response to a question raised at the Economic and Neighborhood Development City Service Area Budget Study Session regarding costs associated with inspection of public schools.

Background

The San Jose Fire Department inspects all public and private elementary, middle, and high schools in the city, as required by State law. Inspections are assigned to both line engine companies and Fire Prevention Inspectors, based on the grade level. Engine companies inspect elementary and middle Schools within their station's primary area of responsibility. High schools are the responsibility of Fire Prevention Inspectors from the Bureau of Fire Prevention. High schools require more specialized knowledge and more extensive review, including that of the Hazardous Materials Business Plan (HMBP).

All schools are required to be inspected annually. Public school inspections are performed without charge; private schools are subject to an annual permit and inspection fee of \$300.

Analysis

Line personnel perform annual fire safety inspections at elementary and middles schools in San Jose. Additionally, they perform cursory walk-through reviews of high schools to be familiar with the layout and emergency action plans of the facilities.

High schools have a greater potential over elementary and middle schools for hazardous incidents due to larger auditoriums, assembly areas, chemical labs, and hazardous materials storage. They require more specialized knowledge and a more comprehensive inspection. Consequently, these inspections are assigned to Fire Prevention Inspectors.

All inspections, regardless of grade level or school, include the following:

- Reviewing structural layout of school, areas of assembly, and driving routes.
- Conducting fire drills.
- Examining fire drill and suppression system records.
- Examining suppressions systems, e.g. fire extinguishers, fire alarms, and sprinkler systems.
- Inspecting classrooms and cafeteria for methods of egress, emergency response plan, and that combustibles are kept to a minimum.
- Inspecting kitchen areas and ensuring that hood and duct system servicing records are current.
- Inspecting boiler and electrical rooms to ensure there are safety measures to prevent hazardous incidents and that the rooms are not being used for storage.

In addition to the tasks above, inspections of high schools also include the review of the schools' Hazardous Materials Business Plan. Such plans are required because of the hazardous materials found in labs and workshops. The Inspector must review the Hazardous Materials Business Plan for the following components:

- Contact information for emergencies – during business hours and after-hours.
- The Chemical Inventory, including hazards and appropriate storage, as determined by the Fire Code and the Federal Department of Transportation.
- The quantity of materials, which determines the occupancy level and the level of fire suppression controls needed.
- Site map, which must include the layout of buildings, identify the hazardous materials storage areas, utility shutoff sites, and access and exit routes.
- Contingency Plan in case of incident – must include notification systems, evacuation plan, personal protective equipment, and training.

The costs associated with performing inspections are different between a Fire Prevention Inspector and an Engine Company. The hourly cost of a Fire Prevention Inspector is \$85.00 per hour. An Engine Company consists of four personnel: 1.0 Fire Captain; 1.0 Fire Engineer; 1.0 Firefighter/Paramedic; and 1.0 Firefighter. The total hourly cost of personnel on an Engine Company is \$345.00 per hour.

The following table displays the types of inspection, total facilities, average length of inspection, and the annual cost of inspection associated with public schools.

Type of Inspection	Total Facilities	Length of Inspection	Annual Cost of Inspection
Elementary & Middle Schools	157	2-3 hours	\$135,412
High School	49	3-5 hours	\$16,660

Based on the chart above, approximately \$152,072 of related personal service cost is associated with the inspection of public schools. The Fire Department is not currently recovering the expenses associated with annual fire inspection of these schools.

/s/
JEFFREY L. CLET
Fire Chief